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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0522
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2// PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 001301

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SENSITIVE

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN, NSC FOR DAVID MERKEL, DS/IP/SCA AND DS/DSS

REF: 05 Ashgabat 219

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: NIYAZOV DEATH SITREP 003: 12/22/06

Summary

11. (SBU) Embassy welcomes Washington's discussion of next steps for Turkmenistan and offers the following input:

-- The focus should be on the historic opportunity for a "new relationship," and respect for the outcome of the transition to a new president. Having A/S Boucher head the USG delegation to the funeral underscores this theme; expedited confirmation of a new U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan will reinforce our wish to start fresh.

-- The Government of Turkmenistan would welcome delivery of medical supplies, including measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines, tuberculosis laboratory reagents and microscopes.

-- A USG incentives package should focus primarily on health, education and the economy, to include increases in cooperation in health programs, educational exchanges and English-language programs, funding for more American Corners, increased numbers of Peace Corps volunteers, and cooperation with the banking and agricultural sectors.

-- The security component of an incentives package should include funding for two more border crossing stations, increased funding for EXBS and INL activities and increases in International Military Education and Training (IMET), Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and FBI and Secret Service training.

Embassy estimates these packages would total between \$15m and \$20m.

End Summary.

New Relationship, Not Revolution

12. (SBU) The most palpable emotion on the streets of Ashgabat is fear, driven by uncertainty about the future. For all his excesses, Niyazov represented stability to the people of Turkmenistan. Any appetite for change is seasoned with caution. The focus of U.S. statements/actions should be respect for Turkmenistan's stability

and a willingness to work with the new administration.

13. (SBU) Embassy welcomes the A/S Boucher-led U.S. delegation to Niyazov's funeral. A/S Boucher represents a new beginning, both as head of the Department's newest bureau and as a first-time visitor to Turkmenistan. During recent talks with Foreign Minister Meredov, before Niyazov's death, Charge began stressing the need to resolve festering issues in order to pave the way for a "new relationship" with an eventual new U.S. Ambassador. Expedited confirmation of a new ambassador would reinforce the need to start fresh.

Medical Supplies Now

14. (SBU) Immediate delivery of critical medical supplies would present another concrete sign of USG desire for a new relationship. Embassy warns against use of the term "humanitarian assistance;" in Turkmenistan, this is a loaded term with negative baggage. In order to open doors, embassy recommends couching our assistance as "cooperation." Specifically, embassy recommends sending \$1m in measles-mumps-rubella vaccines (approximately 2.1 million doses), and \$10,000 in tuberculosis laboratory reagents. Turkmenistan also has a critical need for 50 Olympus microscopes for clinical diagnosis (approximately \$60,000).

Increased Cooperation

15. (SBU) In general, embassy requests increases across the board in Freedom Support Act, Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS), and International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) cooperation. Embassy notes that, as Deputy Chairman for Health, Education, Culture and Science, Berdimuhammedov was not an

ASHGABAT 00001301 002 OF 003

enthusiastic supporter of U.S. assistance programs; he famously set the cap on Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) students at just 50 (to which the USG never agreed). Nevertheless, embassy recommends making the offer of increased cooperation to Berdimuhammedov in his new role as president in the spirit of building a new relationship with him and whomever may succeed him. In order to avoid allegations of fomenting a "colored revolution," embassy suggests cooperation be focused on health, education, the economy and security, at least in the short-term. Overt "democracy-building" programs not only are unlikely to be approved, but also could call into question our desire to work productively with the new government.

Health

16. (SBU) Berdimuhammedov is relatively supportive of health, not surprising given his medical background (he's a dentist). Embassy recommends increases in the following USAID-managed programs, which embassy estimates would total \$2.5 million in additional funding:

-- Replace shortfall of approximately \$400,000 in latest FY07 projections, which forced cuts to ZdravPlus, CDC, and CAPACITY.

-- Expansion of the TB Directly Observed Treatment Shortcourse (DOTS) Program to another welayat (province) - \$1,225,000.

-- Expand the Healthy Communities (\$150K), Drug Demand Reduction (\$500k), Live Birth Definition (\$100k), and Infectious Diseases (\$350k) programs.

Education

17. (SBU) Education remains a critical concern shared by most local embassies as well as international organizations. Though in the past, the government -- in particular Berdimuhammedov -- has resisted education cooperation, he may respond differently as president. Embassy recommends the following, which embassy estimates would total \$1.5 million in additional funding:

-- Increase the number of FLEX students to at least 100 (last year the USG funded 63 students from Turkmenistan).

-- Fund two additional American Corners in Balkanabat (Balkan Province) and Tejen (Ahal Province) for a total of seven corners.

- Reintroduce budget for Internet Access and Training Program (IATP). Open an IATP center in National Library.

-- Increase the Undergraduate Program for Eurasia (UGRAD) from one to four years,

-- Increase the number of Teachers Excellence and Achievement (TEA) program, Muskie Fellowship, and Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP) slots,

-- In addition to increasing the number of Fulbright Fellows from Turkmenistan, request that Turkmenistan accept U.S. Fulbrighters to do research in Turkmenistan.

-- Increase Democracy Commission Funding from \$120k to \$200k.

-- Assign a Regional English Language Officer to Embassy Ashgabat.

-- Fund four English Language Fellow (ELF) positions.

-- Increase Peace Corps Volunteers from 40 to 52 in the next year.

-- Increase funding for USAID's Participation, Education and Knowledge-Sharing (PEAKS) basic education program to expand from in-service to pre-service training.

Economic Development

ASHGABAT 00001301 003 OF 003

18. (SBU) Embassy has modest traction in the agricultural and banking sections and suggests the following changes:

-- Improved agricultural productivity by expanding funding for USAID's upcoming AgLinks program (\$250k),

-- Increased Farmer-to-Farmer volunteers,

-- Expanded Economic Development grants for communities in USAID's Community Empowerment project (\$250k),

-- Support bank officer loan training to provide micro-financing (\$300k),

-- Provide economic and energy policy assistance (\$500k).

Security Cooperation

19. (SBU) The Government of Turkmenistan considers itself a partner in the Global War on Terror and over the past three years has increased its cooperation on counter-narcotics and border security. Berdimuhammedov is likely to support increased cooperation, specifically:

-- CENTCOM funding for two additional border-crossing stations at Farap (Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan) and Seraks (Iran-Turkmenistan) for a total of \$5 million, and an additional \$5 million for CENTCOM Counternarcotics communications equipment to assist the stations in communicating with Ashgabat.

-- An additional \$600k for portal monitors under the EXBS program.

-- Double the IMET program from \$250k to \$500k (to permit more military officers to attend training in the United States) and increase FMF from \$300k to \$900k to expand the English Language Instruction program.

--- From INL - Fund the \$2 million Border Liaison Project and the \$2 million Drug Control Authority Project (fully outlined in reftel).